"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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MRS. HADDAN'S HISTORY.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IV.

FOR a long time there was no sound of voices or footsteps in the garden behind me; and I was about to go away disappointed, when I caught the crackling of gravel in the distance, and the murmur of voices coming nearer to me. They were talking fast and low; but Becket's voice was a little the louder, and its words reached me.

"Not even to you, ma'am," she said. "You are safe, and Lewis is safe. But as long as I live——"

I could not catch what Mrs. Haddan said, though she interrupted her here, but Becket answered in a still louder tone:

"Safe!" she exclaimed, scornfully; "we agreed it was safer with me than with you. No, no. I've kept it so long, that I must keep it still. I should have nothing to live for else. I'm as strong as ever I was in my life. Let anybody just try my strength by trying to get it from me."

The last words came back to me from a distance, for they had already passed my hiding-place. A threat sounded in them for me, and my heart quailed. Suppose this mad woman should detect my purpose, and murder me! What would George do? I wished for the moment he knew where I was, and what I was risking for his sake. But my weakness lasted only for the instant. I shook it off, and was strong again.

I retraced my steps to the road, thinking of Mrs. Haddan's failure to get back the papers she had entrusted to Becket's care. Would she give them up when Lewis came of age, and could make a will? Or would her monomania be strong enough to retain them—a continual torment and anxiety to Mrs. Haddan? Lewis would be of age in a few weeks, and then she might enter into complete triumph, if Becket would release the charge she had once committed to her. But if she would not!

The carriage had disappeared when I regained the road, and I ventured to go on to the house. Mrs. Townshend herself opened the door to me, in her best headdress, and with a bland smile.

"You have just missed seeing Mrs. Haddan, of Haddan Lodge," she said. "I should have taken the liberty of introducing you to her if you'd only been in. She'd have bought some of your paintings, perhaps."

Here was a peril I had escaped by my fortunate absence! I could not help wondering what would have been the result of Mrs. Haddan finding me in the same house as Becket; and I stood silent at the foot of the staircase, staring at Mrs. Townshend.

"Have you met with better luck today?" she asked.

"A little," I answered, stammering. "I have not failed altogether this time."

I went on, up into my dreary room. From its window I could see Becket striding to and fro in a state of suppressed excitement, with a firm, despotic tread, and with her hands tightly clenched in front of her. She saw me at the window, and nodded with an air of friendly patronage. It aggravated me sorely, but I nodded in return, and went away, lest she should suspect that I was watching her.

For the next few days I never lost sight of her, whenever I could possibly be in her presence. My new satchel was carefully concealed under my dress, at hand if any chance should offer itself for substituting

it for the other. But I might as well have dreamed of changing the moon in the sky. If only my eyes rested upon it, some subtle sixth sense made her aware of my notice of it. As for loosing it over her hand at any time, it never so much as fell forward towards her wrist, even when she was eating; for in order to secure my object more fully, I made arrangements for taking my meals with her and the family at the same table. From the first moment when she quitted her bedroom in the morning till the last when she withdrew to it at night, the satchel never left its place upon her arm.

"Whatever has Mrs. Becket got in her satchel?" I asked Mrs. Townshend one day, in a careless tone.

"Oh, nothing!" she answered, evidently believing what she said, "or a few pounds, perhaps. That's where her madness is, you know. She's as right as you are but for that. You'd far better never mention it to her, for she'd be fit to strangle you if you did, for all she's so fond of you. I ought to have told you before. She frightened one of our ladies almost to death for nothing but looking at it too close. There's nothing at all in it; Mrs. Haddan of Haddan Lodge says so; only it's her mania."

"But should not you like to know for certain?" I asked.

"Oh, dear no! she replied, "I don't care. I don't say but what I was curious a bit at first, but then she's been here near ten years, and I'm grown used to it. Besides, I am sure there is nothing much in it. It's too small to hold much, and it's very flat-looking."

"Does she never let it off her arm?" I said.

"Never that I know of," answered Mrs. Townshend. "I daresay she sleeps with it on her arm."

That was what I resolved to find out; but how was it to be done? I was friendly enough with Becket to follow her up to her own room when she was there; and she had admitted me inside it without any reluctance. It was a very comfortable attic, over the drawing-room, which had an unusually large bay window at the end of it. The attic opened upon the leads of this bay, which formed a kind of balcony before it, where she could go out at any hour to look over the garden she was so fond of. Some choice flowers in pots were arranged upon it, and ivy and Virginian creepers were trained about her window, which opened inwards with two leaves like folding doors. There was a blind to this casement, but it was plainly to be seen that it was seldom drawn down; in fact Becket was a very early riser, and she did not need it from any fear of being overlooked. The fastening of the window was broken, and she told me that when the wind blew against that side of the house she was obliged to set a chair against it to keep it closed. I had paid very little heed to these details at first, but now they recurred vividly to my memory, as offering me helps towards the fulfilment of my purpose.

I complained of headache, and went early to bed, locking my sitting-room door upon myself, as it was my custom to do. Then I dressed myself in a warm, dark dress, and threw over me a large black cloak; for it was possible that I should have to spend the whole night out of doors, but it was already hot summer weather, and I did not dread that. As soon as it was dusk, but before any of the household were come up-stairs, I glided noiselessly out of my own room, and locked the door behind me, carrying away the key. If anybody should knock there, however loudly, they could only come to the conclusion that I was soundly asleep in the bedroom beyond, to which there was no access except through the sitting-room. I made my way as cautiously as I could through the darkness to the attic floor, and passed through Becket's room to the leads beyond. I knew that the gardener, who had been trimming the creepers, had left his long ladder just in the angle of the bay, and that the highest step was no more than a foot below the leads; so that if I could not return through the room, a retreat was still open for me into the garden. The greatest risk I ran was that Becket might step out herself to glance over the garden lying below in the darkness; but I had taken careful notice of a wooden rain-pipe fully six inches square, which with the thick creepers clustering about it formed a dark recess, where I could very well hide in my black cloak, and brave the keen search of her eyes.

The night came on with profound gloom, and with dense masses of thunder clouds moving heavily across the heavens. All below me lay in thick darkness, and I could scarcely discern the dusky boughs of the trees against the ebony sky. The birds were silent, but for a sleepy twitter now and then, but the moan from the city was louder and more continuous, sadder and more solemn in the night. A few large drops of rain fell, splashing noisily

on the leads, and pattering among the broad leaves of a sycamore close to me. If George only knew where I was now! He thought I was following my own pleasure and amusement, while he was losing heart day by day; but if he could only see me! The tears smarted under my eyelids, and I wiped them away. Looking up again the moment after, I saw a bright stream of light shining through the window across the leads.

Becket opened the casement as if she were coming out, but just then the thunder drops pattered down with fresh fierceness, and she closed it at once. I crept cautiously forward, crouching down to look through the lower panes of the window. She undressed leisurely, and folded each one of her clothes with the minute neatness of a lady's maid; but she never once put the satchel out of her hands. When she wished to draw any of her sleeves over her left arm she passed it to her right, and then back again. Her caution was as vigilant as if she had had a hundred eyes upon her. At length she deliberately unlocked a large trunk, and after some searching brought out of it a little trinket box, which also she had to unlock with a key hidden in a pocket in her dress. I did not suffer my smarting eyelids to wink once while I watched her. From the box she produced a parcel tied up in silk and a soft ball of cotton wool, where there was wrapped carefully a third key. She rubbed it fondly with her fingers, lifted it to her lips, and then drawing a chair to the dressing-table, she fitted it into the lock of her satchel, and opened that.

My suspense while Becket sat gazing down into the gaping satchel was horrible and inexpressible. What was it her eyes saw there? Could it be only, as every body supposed, a purse containing her poor savings, which she had grown to love with an irrational covetousness? Or was it possible that it could be some cherished relic of her only child, the baby who died before Lewis was born? Would she take out the invisible treasure so that I could see it for myself? Her fingers went down into the satchel, and handled the contents, whatever they were, while her eye-balls glistened with a savage and threatening light. She looked up once towards the uncurtained window with a glare so fascinating in its fierceness that, instead of shrinking back, I leaned forward, transfixed with terror, till my face almost touched the panes. She detected nothing, however, in the blackness of the night outside her window; and with an angry snap she closed the satchel, re-locked it, wrapped up the key in its padding, locked that inside the trinket box, which she hid low down amongst her clothes in the trunk, and turned the strong key twice upon it. Then she knelt down, and said her prayers.

I waited a long time after she had put out her candle. The room was not absolutely dark, for she had lit a rushlight; and a very feeble, glow-worm-like light flickered about it, just showing the great outlines of her large frame, and her swarthy face asleep upon the pillow. I pushed softly and persistently at the casement until it yielded with a noiseless motion to my steady pressure. The inner door had to be unlocked and opened before I could venture to approach the sleeper; for I must secure a quick means of escape should she show any signs of awaking. I managed it with equal success, and left it open. All the house was still and soundless, only as I lingered for a moment listening, the clock in the kitchen, which was a long way off, struck one. I could hear, too, the nightingales, which had been silent for nearly two hours, begin to call to one another, and to tune up like some busy orchestra.

In another ten minutes they would be in full concert, and Becket's sleep would be more readily disturbed. I stepped to the side of her bed, and looked down upon her. The great strong face, set like iron, was darker in sleep than when waking, and the purple veins in her forehead were knotted and swollen. Her arms, as thick and muscular as a man's, were crossed upon her breast, pressing down the satchel upon it. What could I do? I might as easily have snatched it from some sleeping lynx. Yet our future depended upon it—mine and George's. Lewis would soon be of age, and then the papers, if they were there, would be destroyed, and we should lose our only chance. What could I do? I stretched out my hand slowly, almost unwillingly, and touched the satchel upon her bosom—only touched it.

Such a wild, maniacal shriek broke from the lips of the mad woman, that but for the sheer instinct of self-preservation I should have been paralysed by it. How I fled in time I do not know; but before the frantic cry was repeated, and before any of the household were out of their rooms, I was back in mine, quaking with panic, and hearkening intently for a repetition of the

scream, which provoked one from me, in spite of myself, as soon as it rung through the house. I ran out into the lobby with the rest, my face white and my fright more evident than any of theirs. Becket was standing in her doorway, storming and raging like a fury, and defying any of us to go near her. Mrs. Townshend talked and reasoned with her from a safe distance, until she calmed down a little, and retreated, locking her door with a loud noise, and dragging her heavy trunk against it.

I was very ill for some time after that night. The reaction from the excitement produced a low nervous fever, which made me feel as weak and helpless as a child. Mrs. Townshend's doctor saw me, and pronounced me suffering from some severe mental shock. He said so in Becket's hearing, and her conscience accused her of being the cause of my illness. She grew very kind to me, and fonder of me than before, ordering for me all sorts of delicacies to tempt my appetite, and urging me to take short walks about the garden, leaning upon her strong arm. I became better, but the satchel was constantly under my eyes, and a mania to the full, as dominant as Becket's, was gaining possession of me. I ceased to think even of George, and left his letters unanswered. The sole and simple purpose of my life seemed to be to obtain it by any means, and to put in its place the one I always carried about with me. I was on the very verge of madness myself.

Hot sultry weather had come in with June; weather which made the house intolerable, and the garden the only place to live in. Becket herself had not been as well as usual since the night when she had aroused the household, and she was looking anxiously for the next visit of Mrs. Haddan, who, no doubt, would come again before Lewis's birthday arrived. I heard her—for all my senses had grown preternaturally acute, and my ears listened, even in my sleep—leave her attic one morning at the earliest moment of the dawn, and go quietly down-stairs into the garden. It must be insufferably hot in the attics, I thought, and she has gone out to enjoy the cool freshness of the morning. After that I could not sleep myself, and I tossed about thinking of the garden, with the dew upon the flowers, and the soft grey clouds of the dawn floating across the sky. My head felt hot and feverish, and my temples throbbed. I got up at last languidly, and put on my dress over my nightgown. It was not four o'clock yet, and nobody would be about for two hours, except Becket; who was already enjoying herself out of doors. I went down-stairs, as she had done, quietly, and entered the garden. There was an unutterable beauty and peace about it, a bloom and freshness which would vanish away quickly when the sun rose hotly above the shadowing trees. I paced leisurely to and fro, looking first at one flower and then at another. My brain grew calmer, and my temples cooler. I began to think I would write to George, and tell him all, promising to submit to whatever he should wish me to do. The green alley of trees stretched invitingly before me, with the sunbeams already playing through the quivering of the leaves; and I strolled down it, with gentler and clearer thoughts than had been in my mind for many a day. I recollect stopping to look at a whole nest full of young fledglings clamouring for food; and then I went on very slowly and calmly till I came within sight of the alcove, and saw—what?

My feet felt rooted to the ground for a minute or two, and my heart throbbed painfully. There sat Becket in her favourite corner, with her face turned from me, but evidently fast asleep; so soundly asleep that her left arm had fallen to her side, and the satchel had slipped from it to the floor at her feet. I could not believe my own eyes, or be sure that I was not dreaming; but, seeing that she did not move, I unfastened my duplicate satchel from within my dress, and stole noiselessly forward, ready to assume my ordinary aspect if she should wake. Was it possible that I was so near success at last? Within reach of her powerful arm I stopped again, looking, not at her, but at the satchel. There was still no sign of waking, no stir or movement about her; there was not even a sound of breathing through her lips, though she was close enough for me to touch. I raised my eyes from the satchel to her face, and saw hers wide open, but with no sight in them: they were looking at me, but could not see me. Her listless hand, upon which my fingers fell for an instant, was cold like frozen iron. She was dead!

I was more fearful of stooping to seize possession of the satchel now than I had been before. I could not move to touch it. My own fell from my powerless fingers to the ground beside it. There sat the dead woman in her awful slumber, never to be broken, and I stood beside her, while the morning light grew stronger, and the sounds of life came oftener

to my ears. Yet after a long while I remember I knelt down, still looking up into her terrible face, and groped with my shaking hand about her feet. It struck against the satchel, and I started up, and fled guiltily back to my room, only just strong enough and prudent enough to lock the door before my consciousness forsook me.

It was full day, when I came to myself, and there was a great stir and commotion in the house. I dressed, and put on my bonnet and shawl, for now I had nothing to do but to get to London, to George, if my powers did not again fail. I fastened the satchel safely round my waist, where I could not lose it, and went down the stairs, a step at a time, holding by the banisters. I wished to get away without seeing any one, but Mrs. Townshend met me in the hall, too much excited to be surprised by anything strange in my appearance.

"Do you know," she exclaimed, hastily, "Townshend has found Mrs. Becket in the garden, dead, stone dead? It was apoplexy, the doctor says. Townshend has taken away her satchel to Haddan Lodge according to orders; and I daresay Mrs. Haddan will come over herself about the funeral."

I made only an incoherent answer, saying I was going up to London. How I reached there is a mystery to me to this day; but the first thing I recollect is seeing the door of a gloomy sitting-room opened, and George sitting alone before a table. He did not move or look round, and the fancy smote upon me that he, too, was dead. With a cry which rang through the hotel, I ran to him, and threw my arms about him, asking over and over again if he was alive. But when I came to myself I told him, sobbing between each word, to open the satchel for himself. The lock was a strong one, and he could not unfasten it, and I bade him cut it open with his knife.

The missing documents were all there; George Haddan's letter to his father, his will and the marriage certificate. After all, it proved that Mrs. Haddan had not been married in London, but in a small church out at Stoke Newington, which had been sold, and removed stone for stone to make a chapel for some Dissenters. There was also Mrs. Haddan's letter to her Aunt Becket, a simple, girlish letter, which George keeps to this day. I carried Mrs. Haddan once, when George was away, to the chapel which had once been the church where she was married, and though the arrangement of the interior had been a good deal altered, she had that sensation of its being the very spot so strongly that I was in great fear of her fainting.

George took the recovered documents to Mr. Newill, and together they went to Haddan Lodge and demanded an interview with Mrs. Haddan. Of course she had already discovered that she had lost them, though she had no notion, and has none to this day, how or when they went out of Becket's possession. She was glad to hear of any arrangement by which the matter could be hushed up. It was never made known, but all the world, including Lewis, believed that George Haddan's children had only just come forward to lay their claim to the estate. Instead of dying Lewis became quite well, and married his cousin Margaret; but they were by no means badly off, as he had all the property of his mother, who had been the only child of a wealthy banker; they live near to us; but the dowager Mrs. Haddan has never entered the doors of Haddan Lodge after once quitting it, nor even looked on the face of George's mother. Mrs. Haddan has a suite of rooms in our house, and continues to be the meekest and most tearful of women. This is the end of her history.

OUR LADY OF THE FIR-TREES.

It was on a winter's afternoon in Lucerne, that we, three sisters, tired of hanging listlessly over the little opening of the huge German stove in the apartments our family occupied at the Hôtel du Cheval Blanc; tired of looking out for hard words in the German dictionary, and forgetting them next minute; tired of looking through the double window of snow-rimmed glass, at other snow-rimmed double windows in the opposite houses of a narrow street; at last became desperate, and, casing our hands and feet in velvet gloves and fur-lined boots, sallied forth with the intention of securing at least an up-and-down walk on the long covered bridges which stretch from shore to shore across a certain narrow portion of the lake.

It was a dreary afternoon. Winter, with its alternate wild and piercing winds, and its intervals of death-like silence, brooded over the mountains and over the lake; turned the blue waters of the gone-by

summer into steel; filled the narrow streets of the town with ice and snow; and made every place bleak, slippery, and dangerous.

It was hard to believe that the radiance of summer had ever been shed on those dreary mountain ranges, or that the blue gentian had ever mocked the sky of August in those ghastly hollows, or that the crimson flush of the rhododendron had ever lighted up, or the sweet Alpine rose ever made fragrant, those dim and frozen recesses. The long perspective of the covered bridges opened drearily before us as we cautiously ascended the flight of slippery steps which led to the entrance. Not a soul was to be seen from end to end of the long boarded walk, on the wooden roof of which is dimly visible the dread imagery of a half faded imitation of Holbein's famous Dance of Death. Through the apertures, placed at intervals to admit light and air, the great gaunt mountains, snow-hooded, stood out against a leaden sky: beneath, the inky waters lay, immovable, about the piers and foundations of the bridge; and not a sound was heard, save the patter of our own footsteps, and the soft fitful slipping of the snow from the edge of the roof above.

When we had nearly reached the centre of the bridge, however, we did hear a sound, and a strange, weird sound! Onward it came in our rear, as if some strange being came leaping on behind us—nearer—nearer—still nearer—yet stopping at intervals as if to allow us to go on before. And on we did go, faster and faster (there was no turning back): each of us straining every nerve to keep abreast with the other two, in mortal dread of dropping one inch behind. Our pursuer, whoever or whatever he might be, still maintained his self-allotted distance, and once or twice each of us thought (for no one spoke), she heard a low, half-muffled, unnatural laugh. At last, the sound of leaping ceased suddenly, and a silence ensued.

Then, as if by common impulse, we all three turned our heads, took one backward glance, and with difficulty repressed a cry. Our pursuer was still there, only at a little further distance; and in him we recognised, by the huge mis-shapen head, the mischievous leering eye, the unnaturally long and ungainly arms, a miserable being, well known about the town as the licensed idiot: "the Crétin of Lucerne."

To turn back and face this weird creature would have been a risk too great to run. He might, in one moment, in his crazy antics, have flung us, one after the other, through the convenient apertures into the deep dark waters. He might have tossed us up to the ceiling of the covered bridge, and played with us like balls as we came down again! What might he not have done? Any course was wiser than that of turning and attempting to pass him, lonely and defenceless as we were. We must trust in God's good providence, pray inwardly, and hurry on; and so we did—on—on—still on.

Seeing himself discovered, the monster playfully crouched down behind a wooden bench which marked the centre of the bridge, but soon came out from his momentary hiding-place, and renewed his wild leaping and his pursuit. We were now rapidly approaching the further end of the bridge, yet that exit offered but a cheerless prospect. The road upon which it opened was a great, dreary high road, not much travelled at any time of the year, scarcely ever in that season, and with no nearer habitation than its first post town, which was at a considerable distance. From this road branched forth only one other, which led upward among the hills, and soon burying itself in the fir and pine woods, wound its solitary way among their ferns and mosses until it stopped before the steps of a small chapel nearly hidden beneath the drooping boughs. "Our Lady of the Fir Trees," we ourselves had named it, when, in the course of our daily wanderings, we had first seen its slender spire seeking the sky through an opening in the surrounding woods.

It was but a choice of evils which now lay before us. Which of the two roads should we take? The idiot decided this momentous question. He drove us up the narrow woodland one, and up it we rushed accordingly: stumbling over every obstacle on our passage; over roots that straggled across the path, loose stones, pine trunks, everything. Once or twice we thought our pursuer did the same; but, if so, he quickly recovered his feet, following on with fresh zeal. We had a desperate race to gain the refuge of the chapel. At last we reached it. Thank Heaven! its door was open, and its ever-burning lamp, blue and dimmed by the forest-mist, faintly lighted the sanctuary. Thankfully we rushed in, but started back on perceiving it was already tenanted by the Dead.

On an open bier, placed on tressels before the altar, the body of a woman was laid out, waiting for interment next

day. It was that of an old, a very old, woman, of the peasant class; one who must have known many a long year of labour, and probably of privation and poverty, but who now rested, after all her toils and all her struggles, better cared for in death, than she had ever been in life. Kind hands had arrayed her lovingly; a nosegay of bright artificial roses lay upon her breast; and her shrivelled palms were clasped upon a crucifix of ivory. All this we saw in a rapid glance, and, hastening instinctively to the further side of the bier, placed its protection between us and our pursuer. One moment later, his hideous form filled up the little chapel door. All breathless and panting, as if recovering from some recent fall or stumble, he hurried in, and, staring wildly round in search of the objects of his mad pursuit, saw, not the Living, but the Dead.

The change in him was instantaneous. As the decently composed form and the placid eyelids of the aged woman met his gaze, a soothing influence seemed to fall upon his troubled spirit. Overcome, perhaps, by some faintly-stirred up recollection of earlier days when the light of reason may yet have flickered within him; perhaps, by some superstitious awe of which his crazed nature may yet have been susceptible, the Crétin sank slowly down upon his knees, and, hanging his huge head upon his breast, uttered some inarticulate sounds as if in an attempt at prayer. As he did this, we stole softly from within the shadow of the bier, and so round to an opposite door to that by which he had entered the chapel, and which also opened on the forest. It was fortunately unlocked, and through it we passed trembling, into the now darkening wood. Once there, we regained our former path, and ran swiftly down the hill, out upon the great high road, up the steps, and along the covered bridge (the shadows in the nooks and angles of which were now growing long and dark), and hailed with something like rapture the twinkling of the town lights beginning to start forth fitfully, now here, now there, now in this lattice window, now in that, and giving a blessed sense of companionship, and help. Heaven be praised, we needed it no longer. All was still and quiet behind us. The Crétin had remained with the Dead; and the Living reached their home in safety.

"Lord in Heaven! young ladies! What an escape you have had, in not meeting him at all events!" exclaimed our host of the "Cheval Blanc," as, before rushing up-stairs, we told him our adventure in a few breathless words. "Why, he runs at folks like a bull! Many's the whole family he would have gored if he had had but the horns! But this shall be his last performance! An innocent, forsooth, as the old women call him! I will go myself to-morrow, and head a petition to have him sent to an asylum, where he may run and leap for the rest of his days. And then you see, dear young ladies, why if he had destroyed but one of you—mark my words, but one of you!—it would have been enough to scare travellers from our good town for ever so long, and can we afford to lose the English traveller, we poor Swiss? Lord in Heaven, what a merciful escape!"

WORSE THAN BEVERLEY.

Bridgwater holds, in the county of Somerset, a position analogous to that occupied in Yorkshire by the town of Beverley, on whose political history we have already dwelt.* If there be any difference between them, Bridgwater is a shade more corrupt, a trifle blacker, than Beverley. It is difficult to award the palm of corruption, but Bridgwater has one advantage. Its inhabitants got larger sums of money for their votes than the Yorkshiremen could obtain.

The twenty-sixth year of King Edward the First had the honour of first giving two members to Bridgwater. The Commissioners express their conviction that since the year 1800, at least, no election has ever taken place in the town except under the direct influence of bribery in all its forms. The constituency is of a size very convenient for the professor of corrupt practices, numbering some fifteen hundred. Of these at least three-fourths have been in the constant habit of accepting bribes. Of the remainder, by far the largest part are addicted to the giving or negotiating of bribes. And, as is indeed commonly found to be the case in your thoroughly corrupt borough, there is no difference between the rival political parties. Your Liberal bribes, treats, coerces, intimidates, as freely and as unblushingly as your Conservative. We have seen that this was the case at Beverley, and at Bridgwater the same rule applies. Furthermore, again as at Beverley, rank and station are

* See All the Year Round, New Series, vol. iii., p. 441.

not exempt from the taint of bribery. "It is," say the Commissioners, "the chronic disease of the place."

It is not surprising to find that election petitions are no novelties to the inhabitants of this pleasant Somersetshire town. So far back as 1692 the proceedings of its constituency afforded matter for inquiry. In 1781, in 1803, and 1808 petitions were tried. From that date, although bribery was rampant, no inquiry was held up to the date of the Reform Bill of 1832. Since that time four petitions have been presented, and two tried, in each case to the discomfiture of the members whose conduct was cause of complaint. When it is considered that since 1832 Bridgwater has been the scene of thirteen elections, all undoubtedly corrupt, this number of petitions may appear small. But the fact is that everybody was so tarred with the corrupt brush that nobody dared to stir up the local mud. Clean hands were never common with Bridgwater electors.

The earlier elections reported on by the Commissioners are chiefly noticeable for the enormous sums of money lavished upon them. In 1832, an expenditure of two thousand pounds sufficed to frighten the Conservatives from going to the poll, and the two Liberals were elected on the show of hands. This triumph was celebrated by some light-hearted but perhaps slightly blasphemous burlesquing of the Church service, and by assault and battery on the person of an unpopular Tory editor. The proceedings were wound up by the acquittal of the rioters by a suborned jury, and, considering that there was no polling, this election is a very pretty specimen in its way. The money spent on this occasion was merely a drop in the ocean by the side of the expenditure at the general election 1834-5. That was something like an election! Four candidates solicited the suffrages of four hundred electors—the constituency appears to have been reduced that year, for some reason not explained, to that number. One of the old Liberal members presented himself for re-election, and allied with him was a gentleman described as a wealthy stranger from London. This wealthy stranger made no secret of the means by which, if necessary, he intended to achieve success. Remonstrated with for contesting on Liberal principles a borough in which certain of his Conservative relatives took a strong interest, the stranger, whose wealth was equalled by his candour, cleared the ground in the following explicit manner: "Let there be no misunderstanding between us. I have determined to have my election, cost what it will." The privilege of writing M.P. after his name cost this gentleman about eight or ten thousand pounds. The Conservative expenditure is calculated to have been about as much, although one of the then candidates doubts whether he spent more than two thousand pounds—discreetly observing that at so great a distance of time he declines to pledge himself to the literal exactness of this statement. Conservative candidate number two states *his* expenditure at three thousand pounds. So, at the lowest computation, thirteen thousand pounds were required to bribe four hundred voters.

Shortly after this election, the passing of the Municipal Corporations' Reform Act gave the Bridgwater Liberals the opportunity of filling the Town Council and the various posts in its gift with staunch members of their own party. Not only were vacancies filled by Liberals, but Tories were summarily ejected from their posts to make room for members of the more powerful party. It is true that this proceeding caused heavy charges to the borough in the way of the compensations by which these illegal evictions were salved over; but that, probably, mattered little in a borough where thirteen thousand pounds were spent in one election. The bribers in chief on the Liberal side were not neglected in the distribution of good things. The list of the appointments conferred upon one of them is curious. Tester of the weighing machines, weight constable, borough jailer, superintendent of borough police, bailiff to the local county courts, keeper of the Recorder's Court Hall; these offices, together with minor appointments, fell to the lot of one Mr. Robert Bussell. Various members of this gentleman's family were, at various times, provided for in a similar way. It is sad to learn that gratitude is not one of Mr. Robert Bussell's strong points. A "loan" from a Conservative candidate to the tune of five hundred pounds was, the Commissioners tell us, too much for him. He changed his party and his vote from that time: it does not appear that he resigned his offices.

In 1837 there was another election, the gentleman of the eight or ten thousand pounds accepting the Chiltern Hundreds in order to contest Westminster against the late Sir Francis Burdett, and a Conservative was this time elected.

The proceedings of the victorious candidate subsequent to the election are sufficient evidence of the way in which this election had been carried. A petition was presented to the House of Commons containing the usual allegations of bribery, and claiming the seat. As the petitioners were clearly in earnest, and as there could be little or no doubt of the result, the newly-elected member executed a strategic movement, and ran away. That is to say, he wrote to the Speaker announcing his intention not to defend his election, but to let judgment go by default, and thus abandoned the position. Probably the petitioner would have obtained the seat but for the death of King William the Fourth, which occurred at this time, and which was the signal for some further jockeying in the matter of this petition. Parliament was presently dissolved, and, of course, the House of Commons had no opportunity of investigating the matter.

The election to the first Parliament of the reign of her present Majesty took place in 1837, and the result of the Bridgwater polling was perhaps the most extraordinary ever chronicled. Mr. Broadwood, the gentleman who had not accepted the wager of battle on the petition just mentioned, offered himself once more for election in the Conservative interest. With him stood Mr. Courtenay, another of those wealthy strangers who appear to have always been ready to pour their gold into the greedy lap of Bridgwater. The Liberals, on their side, were ready with two candidates. The one, Mr. Sheridan, had been defeated by Mr. Broadwood at the previous election, and had subsequently petitioned, and the other was Sir T. B. Lethbridge. These two gentlemen had consented to contest the borough on receiving a requisition signed by a majority of the registered electors inviting them to come forward and promising support. But the result showed that treachery must be added to venality in the catalogue of Bridgwater's failings. The numbers were:

Broadwood	280
Courtenay	278
Lethbridge	5
Sheridan	2

Of course, all that the requisitionists wanted was a contest which should give them an opportunity of taking the bribes which they calculated would be, and which in fact were, lavishly distributed by the Conservatives. The Commissioners appear doubtful whether the defeated Liberals bribed or no. If they did, the money was certainly thrown away.

Four years later, Bridgwater was again gladdened by a contested election. Mr. Broadwood again offered himself, and had as an ally yet another wealthy stranger, "a large iron merchant in Wales," while the Liberals, on their part, produced two more wealthy strangers. A vast expenditure of money resulted in the return of both Conservatives. Bribes ranged from forty to fifty pounds each, and were taken by men worth thousands of pounds. What are the miserable pounds, and two pounds, and fifteen shillings of Beverley to this?

It was well for the bribees that money was plentiful on this occasion, as six years passed without another contest. It was not until the general election of 1847 that the pleasant chink of corrupt gold was again to gladden the venal ears of Bridgwater. Mr. Broadwood again took the field. Against him there was but one candidate in the Liberal interest, Colonel Tynte. Even Mr. Broadwood had at last become tired of the frightful expenditure necessary at Bridgwater elections. Colonel Tynte had not as yet had personal experience of it, but, being the son of an old member for the borough, doubtless knew something of the circumstances, if only by tradition. Both candidates being thus of one mind, Mr. Benjamin Lovibond, solicitor, "patron," and, so to speak, backer of the colonel, had little difficulty in privately effecting a coalition with the backers of the other man. But this arrangement did not at all suit certain other legal gentlemen attached to the Liberal party. A contest must be secured, or how could all the lawyers of the town profit by the election? A candidate must be found on any terms. Accordingly, Mr. Henry Lovibond, only distantly, if at all, related to Mr. Benjamin Lovibond, went to London, and returned on the nomination day itself, only just in time to win the show of hands, with a "Purity" candidate in the Liberal interest. The coalition between the other candidates was talked of in the town, and was not popular—naturally enough, as, if successful, it would have stopped the accustomed flow of bribery money. The "Purity" candidate was so warmly supported, that soon after the opening of the poll he was found to be in the second place. Here was a dilemma for Colonel Tynte's backers! It was impossible to avoid, outwardly at least, the show of supporting the other Liberal; but

then it was necessary to keep to the original agreement and give the second votes to Broadwood. Of course the bribers had to be called in. The coalition was successful, and the "Purity" candidate was beaten by a large majority. That this gentleman really did contest the borough on strictly pure principles is proved by the fact that his own expenditure amounted to no more than twenty-six pounds. Under these circumstances a petition against the return seems the natural sequence. But no petition was presented, although, as the Commissioners remark, "the lawyers who brought him forward were perfectly well aware of the corrupt practices of his opponents, and of the evidence by which those practices would be brought home to them. That no petition was presented against the return of either of the sitting members is probably to be explained in the same way as the like forbearance on similar occasions at Bridgwater." It is remarkable that, until they had succeeded in ferreting out the history of this election, the Commissioners were assured even by trustworthy witnesses that it was the one pure election that had occurred since 1832.

The same game of coalition between a Conservative and a Liberal was played again at the election of 1852. The split in the Liberal camp still existed, and three Liberals stood for the borough against two Conservatives. The Commissioners acquit these latter gentlemen of having countenanced any corrupt expenditure. The one spent little or nothing, the other, who was eventually successful, spent eleven hundred and fifty pounds, "including the cost of a five months' canvass." Of the Liberals, the two who were ultimately defeated spent some six hundred pounds; one of them, Lord Henley, was, in the course of the polling day, actually applied to for money to be devoted to purposes of bribing, but, to his honour, flatly and unhesitatingly refused it. The victorious Liberal, Colonel Tynte, was elected through corrupt practices, it is said without his knowledge. Money went about freely both in bribery and treating. The price of votes had fallen considerably, ten pounds being now the regulation figure. Notorious bribe agents were employed who, in accordance with the terms of the secret coalition, bribed electors to vote for Colonel Tynte, the Liberal, and Mr. Follett, the Conservative — certainly, be it understood, without the knowledge of the latter gentlemen, who knew nothing of the coalition made by his "patrons." That the bribe agents were not themselves the most trustworthy persons possible, may readily be imagined. The large sums of money passing through their hands must have been tempting, and in the case of one Heal the temptation appears to have been irresistible. This person is described as having undoubtedly "intercepted" at least one hundred pounds of the bribe money with which he had to deal, and does not appear to have been the least ashamed of the transaction. The Commissioners dwell particularly on this defalcation, because, as they note, "it is the first discovered instance of what was soon to become—if it had not already become—the general practice of bribe agents."

Gradually the discords which had torn the Liberal party to pieces were appeased. The rival attorneys buried the hatchet, and jointly started two Liberals at the election of 1857. Mr. Follett, the late Conservative member, opposed them. But as this gentleman moderated his expenditure on the occasion, it is not surprising that he suffered defeat. Mr. Heal was again employed to distribute the Liberal bribes. So highly was this gentleman thought of by his party, that it is in evidence that his chief employer, Mr. Benjamin Lovibond, asseverated in strong language that if Heal deserted the party—as there was some suspicion he was about to do—he (Lovibond) must put up his electioneering shutters. But Heal did not desert the party. He distributed bribes manfully. The Golden Ball Inn was his counting-house, and there he bribed with ten pounds apiece such voters as were brought to him by one Foster, Mr. Lovibond's clerk. It is a curious circumstance, taken in connexion with that hundred pounds with which Mr. Heal's name was connected in the 1852 election, that on this occasion he was unable to account for two hundred pounds when he endeavoured to balance his receipts and expenditure. So odd did the coincidence appear to Foster, that he declined to pay Heal a sum of forty pounds for services rendered, remarking: "Bill, you did us last time, and we have done you this time!" and the Commissioners are evidently entirely of Mr. Foster's opinion. No petition followed this election, although the bribery had been open and notorious. Indeed, to such a pass had things come, that little or no pains were taken to conceal corrupt practices. Each side knew that the other dared not petition.

The sitting members had not much breathing time before having once more to fight for their seats. The general election of 1859 was the signal for the renewal of hostilities. Two accidental Conservatives, as they may be called, disputed the ground with the old members.

Of these new comers, Mr. Padwick, being interested in an election in another part of England, had called at the office of the Conservative agents in London, and had there "promiscuously" met Mr. Smith, a gentleman from Bridgwater, in search of a candidate. The result of the short conversation that ensued was, that Mr. Padwick agreed to stand for Bridgwater, and three weeks afterwards he went down to the borough, provided with a thousand pounds, which were then consigned to Mr. Smith's keeping. At the end of the week it appeared that the money was all expended in settling outstanding accounts, and another thousand pounds arrived from London, in a parcel labelled, "Samples, glass; with care. This side up," and this money likewise was distributed. On behalf of the second Conservative candidate no money appears to have been distributed, inasmuch as that gentleman had made a prudent arrangement by which he was to spend only two hundred pounds if unsuccessful, or a thousand pounds if returned. Both the Liberal candidates were elected, very cheaply it would at first appear, as the published accounts of one of them amounted only to two hundred and forty-eight pounds. About three months after the election, however, this gentleman was, to his dismay, called upon to pay, and did pay, over eleven hundred pounds in discharge of moneys spent illegally on his behalf, a "pull" that must have been disagreeable indeed. Of the expenditure of the other Liberal no account can be got: but as he changed a cheque of his father's for seven hundred pounds at the Bridgwater Bank just before the election, and as the ten-pound notes in which he elected to "have it" were very soon after changed for gold by persons in humble stations, it may be inferred that it was large, and that little secrecy was observed. Many voters were bribed at this election by both parties. The Conservatives bribed a fortnight before the election, the Liberals waited till the polling day, when they intercepted voters on the way to the booth, administered their bribes, and polled their men then and there.

Mr. Padwick had had enough of Bridgwater in this his first essay, but his unsuccessful colleague, Mr. Westropp, conceived the idea of "nursing" the borough by large subscriptions to race meetings, charities, &c., and expended in that process some three hundred and seventy pounds a year. And this process had to be continued for some time, no election taking place before 1865. On this occasion two Liberals appeared to oppose Mr. Westropp, but, as they went on the "Purity" principle, and did not bribe by money payments, they had little chance against the couple of thousand pounds that were forthcoming on the other side. The Conservative was duly elected, and as duly unseated on petition. A cross petition against the Liberal who was second on the poll was dismissed, but his costs were not allowed, for, said the chairman of the committee, "there is nothing frivolous about Bridgwater," and a report was made to the House that corrupt practices had extensively prevailed at the last election.

A circumstance of interest in this election is the re-appearance of our old friend Mr. William Heal. Disgusted with the mean conduct of Foster with reference to that forty pounds, he transferred his services to the Conservative side, voted for Westropp, and received two hundred and fifty pounds to bribe with. In his artless evidence he admits having kept two hundred pounds—a pretty good slice of the cake—for himself, and also admits having committed wilful perjury before the Election Committee of 1866. But what of that? The heart of Bridgwater is with him still, for he assures the Commissioners that none of his proceedings "ever did him the slightest damage at Bridgwater, either in reputation, or in trust, or in commerce, and that even now 'his credit there stands as high as ever it did.'" What an Arcadia!

It was not likely that in a town where every other form of bribery and intimidation was practised, the element of religious persecution should have no place. Robert Coles, a member of a Baptist chapel, who had given evidence before the committee in London, was, shortly after his return to Bridgwater, requested to attend a private meeting at the house of the pastor. At this meeting he was accused by one J. W. Sully, one of the deacons of the chapel, of having "been to London with dirty hands as to bribery and perjury." Coles denied the charge, and it was ultimately arranged that no proceedings should be taken until after the publication of the Blue Book. Notwith-

standing this, Coles was requested not to attend the Communion service on the following Sunday, and on the Monday was, in direct violation of rules, expelled the community by an informal meeting. The pastor and deacons communicated this decision to Coles in a letter, quite shocking in its hypocritical affectation of Christian regret and grief over a backsliding brother, in which it is affirmed, with suspicious iteration, that Coles's punishment has no connexion with the fact of his voting one way or the other, and is entirely for his soul's sake. But when it is stated that Sully was a red-hot Liberal partisan, and, moreover, that he was one of the persons tried for the riots at the election of 1832, the true nature of the transaction will be pretty clear. It is satisfactory to know that Coles afterwards brought an action for libel, during the trial of which it was admitted that he had *not* committed perjury before the Committee of the House of Commons, and recovered fifty pounds damages.

The cost of these two contests of Mr. Westropp's, and the cost of the petition, are put at seven thousand pounds, *for which he never received any account;* this, with the cost of "nursing" the borough for nine years, makes up ten thousand three hundred pounds. A good round sum did Mr. Westropp pay for his whistle!

The next election was a simple affair, and money was freely spent. A Conservative and a Liberal contested the vacant seat. Of these the Conservative, who won by a narrow majority of seven, spent three thousand five hundred pounds. His published expenses amounted to two hundred and sixteen pounds nineteen shillings. The Liberal was very energetic against corrupt practices, and declined to contest the borough except on "Purity" principles. "Purity" principles, the Liberal attorneys declared, were the very principles they loved, and bribery was abhorrent to their souls. So the candidate promised to subscribe six hundred pounds towards the expenses of a petition, should the Conservative win by bribery, and the election went on. After the defeat of their man, notoriously caused by the employment of corrupt practices by the other side, the ardour of the Liberal attorneys on behalf of a petition vanished in a curious way, and the unfortunate candidate began to suspect that all was not right. And well he might, for after some days the managers of the party confessed to having spent large sums illegally, and the expenses of the election turned out to be upwards of fifteen hundred pounds instead of the one hundred and ninety-three pounds ten and twopence (these accounts are always suspiciously particular about the pence) vouched for by the published statement. This money was ultimately paid by the candidate.

The year 1866 was a capital year for corrupt Bridgwater electors, for in June the Conservative member was appointed to the office of Lord Advocate, and was compelled to seek re-election. He hoped, good, easy man, to be allowed to walk over the course, and did not even visit the town until a day or two before the election. He was speedily undeceived. The Liberal managers had discovered a candidate in Mr. Vanderbyl, a London merchant, who was willing to disburse a considerable sum of money for the honour of representing Bridgwater, and who had already had some experience in electioneering, having at the last general election unsuccessfully contested Yarmouth in conjunction with a Mr. Brogden. It was under the auspices of Mr. Brogden, who had no connexion whatever with the place, that Mr. Vanderbyl was introduced to Bridgwater, and the two gentlemen came to the town together. The electors were in capital spirits at the thought of a brisk contest, and received the new candidate most enthusiastically. To use Mr. Brogden's own account of the reception, "There were bands of music, flags, carriage and four, electors very exuberant, beer, &c.," and general drunken jubilation, no doubt. There was no pretence even at this election of anything but bribery, and Mr. Brogden's instructions to the legal agents on the morning of the polling day were simple and decisive. "Go in and win, cost what it may." And with these "up-guards-and-at-'em" kind of orders, the agents went in accordingly. The result was that Mr. Vanderbyl secured three hundred and twelve votes, at a cost of four thousand pounds, his published account of expenses amounting to the modest sum of two hundred and seventeen pounds thirteen and fourpence. As his opponent only spent two thousand six hundred pounds, he very naturally secured thirty-six votes fewer than Mr. Vanderbyl, and lost the election. Of course there was no petition, and Mr. Vanderbyl remained in undisturbed possession of the seat.

In 1868 occurred the general election consequent on the appeal made to the country on the Irish question. The sit-

ting members determined again to contest the borough. They were Mr. Kinglake, who had represented the town since 1857, and Mr. Vanderbyl, whose election we have just noticed. On the other side were Mr. Westropp and a Mr. Gray. Mr. Westropp had declared, after his experience of 1866, that he had done with Bridgwater. But he had since then been invited to a Bridge Committee dinner, and at that festival had been heartily received. Carried away by the enthusiasm he had evoked, Mr. Westropp (after dinner) consented once more to stand for the borough. Mr. Gray was a London merchant of no distinction in the political world, and the two candidates were so weak from a political point of view, that the Liberal managers made sure that heavy bribery was meant. On Sunday, the 15th of November (the better the day the better the deed) a meeting of the heads of the Liberal party took place. Mr. Vanderbyl, no doubt thinking he would try and get as much as possible for the four thousand pounds he had already spent, had already announced, through his partner, his intention not to spend any money. This had been received with the greatest dissatisfaction. It was suggested that it was madness to run two Liberals without money, as it was beyond doubt that the Conservatives would bribe freely. Mr. Westropp's antecedents were well known, and, as more than one witness subsequently informed the Commissioners, "Mr. Gray was so insignificant in every sense that unless his name meant money it meant nothing at all." Under these circumstances, it was suggested to Mr. Vanderbyl that he should withdraw. This that gentleman objected to do, and as he appeared equally indisposed to spend money, things were at a dead lock. In this crisis, Mr. Vanderbyl's partner, Mr. Fennelly, suggested that it would be well to sleep on so important a matter, and the Liberal agents, taking the same view of the business, retired at midnight, leaving the candidate and his partner together. Very little sleeping was done, however, for within an hour Mr. Fennelly waited upon a Mr. Cook and informed him that money would be forthcoming. Next morning he went off to London, having sent before his departure a telegram to his partner, Mr. Redfern, in London, "Send fifteen bales, and send Thomas to meet me at the Paddington Station."

Mr. Fennelly was a man of foresight, for it appears, that previous to the interview of Sunday night, he had written to Mr. Redfern, "If I telegraph for bales, a bale shall mean a hundred pounds;" and thus, when it was found that money must be spent, it was ready. "Thomas," who was in reality a clerk named Lomas, met Mr. Fennelly's train at Paddington. The fifteen hundred pounds were taken to Bridgwater, and made up into packages of ten pounds each, facetiously described as samples of tea. The friends of the other Liberal candidate were equally prepared.

The secrets of the Conservative party were well kept. They had, after much consideration, decided on fighting on strictly pure principles, and, in point of fact, did so fight. But, even without the expenditure of money, they were dangerous foes. At eleven o'clock they were far ahead, and at half-past one Mr. Kinglake left the town, giving the struggle up for lost. But later in the day the money power came into play. At three o'clock the Conservative majority, which had been at one time as much as two hundred and forty-eight, had dwindled away to eight, and at the close of the poll the majority was the other way.

A petition was immediately threatened, to the horror of the Liberals, who had relied on the Conservatives being as culpable as they were themselves. Every effort was made to suppress it. But no agreement could be come to amongst the Liberals until it was too late. The petition was tried, and both members unseated. But edged tools are dangerous things to play with, and it is not good to light lucifer matches in a powder magazine. The appointment of the Commission followed the judge's report, and the misdeeds of Bridgwater were all exposed. The truth was not elicited without a vast amount of wrangling and squabbling, for which the Commissioners cannot be held wholly blameless; but the truth *was* at last elicited, and the result is before us in the report (the second) from which we have gathered the foregoing history. One point in connexion with the last election may be noted. It was conclusively proved that at least two-thirds of the new voters admitted under the last Reform Bill were corrupt. One of the Liberal agents, who ought to have been a good judge, stated that on the morning of the election he saw hundreds of the new voters standing about in the cattle market, like cattle themselves, waiting for the highest bidder.

This is the history of Bridgwater, worse even than that of Beverley. It is satis-

factory to know that the history ends here. Criminal prosecutions have been followed by a disfranchising bill, and political Bridgwater may be considered extinct.

MAY DITTY.

Cuckoo! cuckoo! for love and mirth
My heart is gay;
I have no wish, no wish on earth,
Sweet, sweet, 'tis May!

The swallows on my roof awake
With twittering notes,
In chorus full, as though they'd break
Their little throats.

Cuckoo! cuckoo! I hear it sing
From out the grove,
And all the hills are echoing
The voice of love.

Sweet dreams from off my eyelids go,
I live again;
I hear the rosebuds talking low
About the rain.

I hear the lambs upon the lea,
The throstle's brood;
The flowing music of the sea,
The breathing wood.

I hear the panting of the brook,
I hear the sigh
O' the lily that the water shook
When hurrying by.

Rise, little head, all golden-ringed,
Lent me by God!
Wake, little spirit, angel-winged,
And flit abroad!

Wee baby in thy tiny bed
Come, crow again!
I'll gather thee that jewel red
Set in our pane!

I'll deck thee all in snowy state
Monarch of spring!
With crimson roses from the gate
I'll crown thee king.

The birds shall pipe and tell our sport
To all things gay,
And we will hold a merry court
This first of May!

ACCORDING TO COCKER.

Hamlet assures us that if a man would have his memory outlive his life half a year, he must build churches; "else shall he suffer not thinking on." The prince had, doubtless, forgotten (or perhaps he never knew) the story of the distroyer of Diana's Temple; otherwise, he surely would have rather said he must burn churches, and then, by way of giving (after his wonted fashion) a sounding finish to the sentence, he might have forestalled the poet of a later period, and have spouted to the fair Ophelia the well-known couplet:

> Th' aspiring youth who fired the Ephesian dome
> Outlives in fame the pious fool that raised it.

It is possible that he was on the very point of proposing some such amendment upon his former reflection when the players appeared upon the stage and interrupted him. Perhaps, however, still a surer way of making the memory outlive the life is to become the author of some popular school-book. People never forget the names of the books they used at school, and it is natural that this should be so. Up to quite a recent period it was customary in "beating the bounds," on All-hallows day, that a certain number of small boys should be impressed into the expedition, and be bumped upon each successive boundary stone of the parish. The theory of this savage ceremony was that it tended to impress the minds of the children with an indelible recollection of localities, and that, in after years, in event of any dispute arising with regard to parochial landmarks their memories would serve to settle the disputed point as well as, or better than, a written record. School-books are the boundary-stones of the parish of Parnassus. They are set upon the frontiers, and our arrival at each of them in succession is associated with so much mental (and possibly physical) fricture and abrasion, that their names and all connected with them become fixed upon the memory. Then, the names of the authors of these terrible "horn-books" are passed down from parent to child, perhaps long after the books themselves have been superseded by others, and their surviving titles have ceased to convey any very definite meaning. Fletcher of Saltoun said that he did not care who made the laws, provided only he might write the popular ballads. In a similar way, an aspirant for posthumous notoriety would, perhaps, be justified in exclaiming: Let who will build churches, or burn them; only let me write the school-books. But though he will, doubtless, get the notoriety, yet, as we have just intimated, it will, probably, be a very barren one. Stat nominis umbra. His name will survive, and that is all. Indeed, it very frequently happens that the names and expressions which are most commonly in use are also those of which the least is known. Household words, as a rule, are words about which people are content to hold the most vague and hazy notions: just as their own country is sometimes almost the only one in which persons have never travelled.

Not long ago a play, which had duly passed under the inquisitorial eye of the Lord Chamberlain, was enacted for the first time at one of the London theatres.

In one part of the dialogue there occurred the familiar line from Goldsmith, "and fools who came to scoff, remained to pray." To the surprise of the actors, and of some part at least of the spectators, it was received with a storm of disapprobation. Subsequently, it transpired that "the groundlings" imagined that the offending passage was quoted from the Bible. Then, too, there is Lindley Murray, patron-saint of the grammarians. How glibly and familiarly it is the custom to speak of him! With many of us it is the way to talk of him as "old Lindley Murray," in a half-tender, half compassionate, tone of voice: as though he were a departed friend of the family; genial and amusing enough, but withal somewhat odd and pedantic. We venture to say, that not one person in a hundred knows anything of the career and labours of the illustrious worthy whose "sponsorial and patronymic appellations," he thus recklessly takes in vain. Of "rare Cocker," moreover, to borrow the title conferred upon him by one of his enthusiastic admirers, it may be said that the name survives and is familiar to every one, while his life and character are all but unknown. Let ours be the glory to exhibit the renowned arithmetician as he appears under "the fierce light" of adulation thrown upon him by certain of his admiring contemporaries, and by himself!

"That most ingenious and industrious philomath, penman, and engraver, Mr. Edward Cocker," was born in London, in 1631, and resided in St. Paul's Churchyard, where he practised the art of engraving, and taught writing and arithmetic. To his excellence as an engraver, Pepys bears testimony in his Diary. He speaks of having employed Cocker to engrave his "new sliding-rule with silver plates, it being so small, that Brown that made it, could not get one to do it." Cocker, however, succeeded in the difficult and delicate task, and, in spite of the rule being so small, he made use of no magnifying-glass. Pepys also speaks of finding Cocker "by his discourse very ingenious; and among other things, a great admirer of, and well read in, the English poets, and undertakes to judge them all, and that not impertinently." His published works consist of his celebrated arithmetic, and of a variety of copy and other exercise books, Of these, one of the best is "The Pen's Triumph, a copy-book containing examples of all hands, adorned with incomparable knots and flourishes, being all distilled from the limbec of the author's own brain, and an invention as useful as rare; with such directions as will conduct an ingenious practitioner to an unimagined height. Also a choice receipt for Inke." The frontispiece exhibits a portrait of the author, at twenty-six, and represents him in the falling collar of that day, and wearing a small moustache. His face bears something of a grave or settled look, as becoming "a practitioner in sublime and incomparable arts." The next page is occupied by a quadruple acrostic (in these degenerate days, double acrostics are deemed to be a sufficient tax upon the witty), "dedicated to my renowned friend, Mr. Edward Cocker, by H. P."

A modern writer maintains that, "there is one kind of religion in which the more devoted a man is, the fewer proselytes he makes — the worship of himself." If this be the rule, as it doubtless is, Cocker must be the exception which is said to prove it. The illustrious and ingenious penman was, as will be shown presently, an egotist, "a devout" egotist, "religious in it." He set up a shrine, in which he was deity, priest, and thurifer, all in one. Yet he was not without a "following" of the most devoted and servile worshippers. In another of his copy-books, we have the following "Apostrophe to Cocker,"

O, who can thus miraculously command
His pen, unlesse an angel guide his hand?
No pestilential blasts from putrid lungs
Shall blast thy fame. No, thy remorse shall dwell
On high, when envy plunges into Hell.

Another address "to this admired book, and its more admired author," succeeds in taking the one step which leads from the sublime to the ridiculous:

Thus comes my Muse like Sheba's Queen, to be
The blest admirer of thy works and thee.
Thy heav'n-resembling books, for which even all
The world's vast empire were a gift too small.

Next comes a statement to the effect that France, Italy, Holland, and England held a contest for the palm of calligraphy. The result of it is stated in the following chaste and beautiful couplets:

The Dutchman had it, if fame tell no lie,
But being butter-fingered, let her flie;
Now glorious England, she is mine, and mine
Rare Cocker, in whose works her beauties shine.

Finally, the Muse is called upon to raise a triumphant arch, "not a vast heap of stones, but stars." The sun, too, is to stand still and no longer "run about this mole-hill,"

But to stand centinel on this glorious frame,
And in celestial flame speak forth great Cocker's name.

"Pretty well, sir, for one man."

But to return to the "Pen's Triumph." The first copy in it is of a most ornate description. It represents a chubby boy (pen in hand), seated on what looks like an idealised bicycle. A nondescript bird, quite unknown to naturalists, is flying over his head. The vehicle is drawn by a pony, ridden by a winged postillion, who bears in his outstretched hand a wreath of laurel, inscribed with the mystic name of "Cocker." The centre of the picture is devoted to these lines:

> Some sordid sotts, cry down rare knotts,
> Whose envie makes them currish;
> But art shall shine, and envie pine,
> And still my pen shall flourish.

In these lines it may be seen that the author boldly "rises upon the wings of prophecy." There is a defiant lilt about the metre, as though it would bear down opposition, and carry everything before it. And yet, curiously enough, it has something in it like the ring of an epitaph. In another copy, the sentiment and the wording of the lines are really admirable, and would not disgrace the pen of the "saintly" George Herbert:

> Braine-drowsie qualmes expell, be valiant, play the man,
> Hee oft' times gaines the field, who bravely thinks hee can.

As a happy instance of combining the utile cum dulci, it may be noticed that the book concludes with this statement, in the most florid type: "The author hereof is making the largest copy-book in the world, and he hopes that it will be the best."

In the latter part of this announcement there is a touch of modesty quite unusual in Mr. Cocker, when he is speaking of himself and of his own productions. Another of Cocker's works contains directions how to make and hold a pen, and write different hands. It opens with the following Johnsonian exordium; "To the lovers and practitioners in the art of writing. I might for a preludium salute you with an oratorical charming composure or discourse, that might win you to an admiration of fair writing, but such a circumlocution and illustration were in vain, it being in itself as far above the reach of rhetoric, as are the most incomparable professors thereof above that of envy." He then proceeds to give most minute directions for making a pen. "Being provided of a penknife, razorr-metall, or a small thin French blade, which you may best sharpen on a hoane—you may trie whether it be sharp or not on your fingers—but you had better procure the first, second, or third quill in the wing of a goose or raven. For the fancy handwriting known as 'running secretary,' each letter is to exhibit wanton meanderings and spreading plumes.

> A nimble sphere-like motion of the hand,
> Coin capitals and curious strokes command."

Very *curious* strokes, indeed, one would be tempted to imagine, with those at least whom Mr. Cocker speaks of as his "young tyroes." Before casting the book loose upon the world, the author thinks it necessary to anticipate and to disarm malevolent opposition. He fears that what he means as medicine for all may be converted into poison by some, "for this will appear before faces sour enough to turn nectarr into vinegar, and those of our own faculty too." The reason he assigns for this, is, that "they'll even be angry with their eyes for seeing more knowledge communicated to every boy than every master was before accomplished with," and then, in an amusing tone of self-complacent superiority and condescending patronage, he concludes: "but when they shall know here's not a tenth part of what I could have wrote, and that all I am enriched with is at their service, which (if they had it) will make them capable of teaching anybody whomsoever, then I hope they'll chear up again, and look with as pleasant a countenance upon me as I shall upon them."

"Cocker's Morals, or the Muses' Springgardens, consisting of Distichs and Poems for Scholars to turn into Latin, or Transcribe into various Hands," is a book worth noticing for the sake of one of the distichs, which runs as follows:

> Artists invested with rare skill and worth,
> Scorn that their tongues the same should trumpet forth.

These are lines from which we think the author might himself have gleaned a serviceable lesson, but it is a good divine who follows his own teaching. Cocker's Arithmetic was not published until some years after his death. It was edited from the author's manuscripts by his friend John Hawkins, who was, like himself, a writing-master. The book is entitled, "A Plain and Familiar Method, suitable to the meanest Capacity, for the full Understanding of that Incomparable Art." The author's own preface is a composition of amusing verbosity. Indeed, in its extreme grandiloquence it well-nigh out-Cockers Cocker. The style of the opening sentence in particular reminds one of the well-known cry of the Turkish costermongers, "In the

name of the Prophet, figs!" "Having, by the sacred influence of divine Providence, been instrumental to benefit of many by the useful arts of writing and engraving, now, with the same wonted alacrity, I cast this my arithmetical mite into the public treasury, beseeching Almighty God to grant the like blessing as on my former labours." He then proceeds to state that he had long been desired by his friends to publish, "who, in a pleasing freedom, have signified to me that they expected it would prove extraordinary." The work is presently stated to be addressed,

I. "To the honored merchant: knowing that as merchandise is the life of the weal-public, so practical arithmetic is the soul of merchandise."

II. "For excellent professors, whose understandings soar to the sublimity of the theory and practice of this most noble science, that they may employ this tractate as a monitor to instruct their young tyroes."

III. "For you, the ingenious offspring of happy parents, who will willingly pay the full price of industry and exercise for those arts and choice accomplishments which may contribute to the felicity of your future state: for you, I say, ingenious practitioners, was this work composed, which may prove the pleasure of your youth and the glory of your age."

Imagine a schoolboy cherishing a treatise on arithmetic as the delight of his youth, and the glory of his maturer years! The last persons to whom the work is addressed are "the pretended numerists of this vapouring age, who are more disingeniously witty to propound unnecessary questions, than ingeniously judicious to solve such as are necessary. By studying this, they may become such artists as they now only seem to be. The rules are grounded on verity; the problems are well weighed. Therefore, now, Zoylus and Momus, lay you down and die." The book concludes with "Laus Deo soli."

The first edition was issued in 1677; the fourth in 1682; the thirty-seventh in 1720; and in the year 1758, this work actually reached a fifty-fifth edition. It was said of Socrates that he was the first who brought down philosophy from heaven to earth. The biographers of Cocker assert that he was the first who reduced arithmetic from an abstract science, and made it purely mechanical. His book was the first which excluded all demonstration and reasoning, and confined itself to commercial questions only. This was, doubtless, the secret of its wide circulation. His work forms the basis of most of the arithmetical treatises that have appeared in more recent times.

The rules of the method of modern arithmetical works may still in a certain sense be said to be "according to Cocker." Perhaps this fact may plead in at least partial justification of the extravagant eulogy which he thus pronounces upon his own works:

> Let Zoylus carp, let Momus bark; let all
> Their vast retinue spit their spleen and gall,
> While sun and moon the day and night command,
> These works, the author's monument, shall stand.
> These shall be used in schools from age to age,
> Till all our arts, and skill, and time shall be
> Swallowed in immence eternitie.

Farewell to thee, great and illustrious practitioner! Even at the risk that Ben Jonson's majestic ghost may rise and walk the earth in horror at our presumption, we venture to retain the title conferred upon thee by admiring contemporaries:—a title, in the propriety of which thou would'st thyself have most heartily concurred.

O *rare* Ned Cocker!

GREEK BRIGANDS.

THE present King of Greece may claim some pity for the legacies left him by his predecessor. Ten years ago, M. Edmond About told us, in "La Grèce Contemporaine," that King Otho did not blush to have about his person, individuals of evil repute and suspected of brigandage. The Grivas, who were in high favour for years, directed in the north certain bands of fearless and devoted men. Moreover, brigandage in Greece is not what we might suppose it to be. It is a source of illicit gain for a number of petty robbers, who combine in gangs of thirty or forty to empty the pockets of a trembling traveller, or of a few country people returning from market. But for people of talent, for superior minds, it is a political weapon of the greatest efficacy.

Was it wished to upset a ministry, in Otho's time? The opposition organised a band; they burned twenty or thirty villages, in Bœotia or Phthiotis, and that without stirring a step from Athens. As soon as they knew the mischief was done, they mounted the tribune, and shouted: "How long, Athenians, will you bear an incapable ministry, who allow villages to be burnt!" and so on. The government, on the other hand, instead of pursuing the brigands and

capturing the guilty, took advantage of the opportunity to torture all the burnt-out people who voted with the opposition. They sent neither magistrates nor soldiers to the spot; they simply sent executioners. This statement is not declamation, but fact.

A deputy of the Left Centre, M. Chourmouzis, a man of firm and moderate temper and related to a deputy devoted to the king, had put questions to the minister of war, M. Spiro Milio. Questions about what? About a brigand named Sigditza, whom the said minister of war retained in the ranks of the army, despite the judicial authorities, who had issued against him ten warrants of arrest.

In answer to these questions, the government sent to Phthiotis, M. Chourmouzis's province, a number of soldiers who were doubtless devoted to their comrade Sigditza; for they put to the torture all the deputy's partisans, asking, "Why doesn't your friend Chourmouzis come and deliver you?" And Greek tortures are almost as ingenious as they are varied. Among them, are, a horse's bit inserted into the mouth, large stones laid on the chest, burning-hot eggs fastened under the arm-pits, frictions with oil preparatory to beatings, salt food to excite thirst, privation of sleep during several days, and thorns thrust under the finger-nails. People in England will not believe such atrocities possible, until experience demonstrates their existence; as when the unhappy Times Correspondent and others were captured and tortured, in the Chinese war. Of the exploits of the Greeks in Thessaly, the Moniteur of May 14, 1854, says: "There is not a horror which has not been committed by these pretended heroes of the Cross. For having refused to give up their money, pregnant women have been ripped up, and their infants cut to pieces." King Otho's ministers, instead of proving that M. Chourmouzis had calumniated the government, shifted the responsibility of those crimes from one to another. The minister of war, who had sent the wretches, said: "If there be disturbances in the interior, apply to the minister of the interior."

It is not asserted that King Otho commanded these atrocities; but he was aware of them: and he neither punished the guilty, nor dismissed his ministers. He readily pardoned crimes which did not touch himself; and when any one denounced to him a robber or a murderer, he thought it a sufficient justification to say: "He is a devoted partisan of my throne:" forgetting that by partisans of this kind, thrones are rather apt (and most righteously) to be upset.

Brigands in Greece are not, as in other countries still cursed with brigands, a class completely cut off from society. Each troop had then, and probably has still, its director, its impresario, in a town, sometimes in the capital, sometimes at Court. The subalterns often return to civil life; often also the peasant turns brigand for a few weeks, when he knows that a good haul is to be made. The job finished, he returns to his tillage. Of all the countries in the world, Greece is the country in which opportunity has called forth the greatest number of highwaymen.

A Frenchman, residing in Athens, has told how his servant one day timidly accosted him, twisting his cap between his fingers:

"You have something to ask me?"

"Yes, effendi, but I dare not."

"Dare, nevertheless."

"Effendi, I want to spend a month on the mountain."

"On the mountain! What for?"

"To stretch my limbs, saving your respect, effendi. I get rusty here. In Athens, you are a heap of civilisés (I have no intention of offending you), and I am afraid of catching your complaint."

The master, touched by such valid reasons, allowed his valet to take a month's man-shooting. He returned at the expiration of his leave of absence, and never touched so much as a pin of his master's property.

There was a poor gendarme who, for long, long years, aspired after the rank of corporal. He was a good soldier, brave enough, and the least refractory in his company; but his only patron was himself. So he deserted, and turned brigand. Here, he was able to display his talents. He was soon well known to all the heads of the gendarmerie. They tried to catch him, and missed catching him five or six times.

Giving up that game, they sent a friend to treat with him. "You shall have your pardon, and, to make up for your trouble, you shall be made a corporal to-morrow, and a sergeant in the course of the year."

His ambition was satisfied. He consented to be made corporal, awaiting patiently his sergeant's stripes. He had long to wait for them. One day, his patience was worn out, and he returned to the mountain. He had not killed three men, before they made haste to make him a sergeant. He afterwards rose to be an officer, with no other patrons than the persons he had put underground.

There did exist one amazing commandant of the gendarmerie, who seriously endeavoured to put down brigandage. In a few months he made all the brigands hide their diminished heads in their rocky dens. But the authorities lost no time in dismissing him. He was sapping the foundations of society.

Two travellers of M. About's acquaintance, on the point of starting for a province infested with brigands, thought of asking for a safe conduct, from the great personages who patronise the principal bands; but one reflection made them desist. "If those gentlemen, to oblige their underlings, should give them notice of our coming, on the sly, and so make them a present of our luggage! Better trust to chance, than to the honour of a Greek." They set off on their journey without a safe conduct.

They were very near repenting it. One day, after climbing a steep mountain all alone, they were quietly contemplating the landscape, when they found themselves exposed to three guns, levelled at them by three Pellicares. Hemmed in on three sides, they escaped by the fourth, and ran down the hill much more quickly than they had come up. In vain the three gunners shouted, "Stop! stop!" One of the fugitives afterwards stated that, during the run, for the first time in his life, he felt for stags and other poor creatures who are hunted and shot at, with no means of defence but flight.

A Frenchman was cleaned out while returning from a short excursion. The brigands took their choice of his clothes. They left him his percussion gun, those worthies only caring for flint guns. Of course they took his money; but, as he spoke Greek extremely well, he explained to the chief of the band that he could not possibly return to town without a halfpenny. Whether for the love of the Greek tongue, or out of pure charity, the chief generously gave him five francs. This adventure happened within six leagues of Athens.

Athens was once all but taken by brigands. The famous Grisiotis had got together, in the island of Eubœa, a band which was almost a little army. He marched on the capital, and probably would have taken it, if the first shot fired at him had not disabled one of his arms. He fell, and his followers took to their heels. But, had that bullet missed its mark, Athens would have been in the pleasant condition of a hare in the midst of a pack of hounds.

A lady traveller, who was fond of sketching, was robbed of her gold chain, just outside the town, on Mount Lycabetes, by a young Greek, very well dressed and very well made. She was busy finishing a sketch, when the handsome scoundrel came up and plundered her. When asked why she let him approach so close to her, "Could I guess," she answered, "that my chain was all he was thinking of?"

A negress, who died at Smyrna, in the odour of sorcery, had revealed the existence of a treasure which a pacha of Mistra, she was quite sure, had buried at a certain spot. The Greek government, rather simple in such matters by nature, sent out a commission presided over by an ex-minister, and escorted by five hundred infantry soldiers. They began digging away in good earnest. A ship of war lay at anchor close by, ready to receive the treasure. The work was expensive, and it was the season of fevers. After two months labour they discovered a tin candlestick. "We are on the track," they said, and redoubled their efforts. A month afterwards, the president returned to Athens, convinced that the negress had made a mistake. His colleagues strolled piteously towards the vessel. The troops, who had no treasure to protect, followed at a respectful distance. The brigands, who had heard talk of the treasure, said to themselves at the very outset: "Let them search in quiet; we will search *them* afterwards." Disappointed in their hopes, and indignant at the commission's incompetency, they fell upon the commissioners. Those gentlemen lost all their money in the scuffle. One of them, who tried to conceal from the robbers something he had about him, received a sabre-cut which nearly carried away his nose. By such severities, the Greek brigands proved that they had not lost all moral sense, and that they had a horror of trickery and falsehood.

NEW ENGLAND FARM LIFE.

To appreciate the state of farm life in the Eastern States, preliminary account must be taken of two facts, in which it is different from the rustic life of England. While the land of the "right little, tight little," island is, to a great extent, held by a few large proprietors, and there are, therefore, several quite distinct agricultural classes—the landlords, the tenant farmers, the field labourers—in America the land

is very equally divided. There are few or no very large landed properties, few or no tenants, and the farmers own farms, and hold lands of nearly the same dimensions through many miles of farming sections. Then—resulting from the facts that there is plenty of room everywhere in America, that there is not that narrow limit of landed property and that dense population of which one sees evidence in England, and which one sees strictly regulated by English law and custom—there is much more latitude given to the lover of the woods and fields. He is never warned off by monitory boards, threatening prosecutions, or dogs, or irascible bailiffs—expedients necessary, perhaps, where thick populations crowd closely around limited domains.

You must imagine, then, a state of rustic society where every man is absolute lord of his hundred acres or so; where all are equal in feeling and association, and very nearly equal in material riches. You must banish from your mind the impression of lordly charities and patronages; you must conjure up a race of well-to-do, hardy and hard-working, independent, intelligent, and, in their way, proud yeomen, who think themselves fully "as good as anybody," and yet who toil side by side with their "hired help;" who sit at table with their Irish "hands," and who are as keen at a bargain and as "cute" in disposing of their harvest as any farmers in the world. Every one of them has been "raised," as they say, at the free common school of his native village. If you will go half a mile out on the main road, you will not fail to see, playing lustily about the little red school-house, the rising generation of farmers, who will in time take the place of the now middle-aged husbandmen in the fields. So every man has duly had his "eddication," which is, to tell the truth, a far more substantial one than his rather eccentric Yankee dialect would lead you to infer. His newspaper comes, as regularly as the big, old-fashioned stage-coach, from the nearest town; and in the evening, by the great wood fire in that room which, in New England farmhouses, serves at once as kitchen, dining-room, sitting-room, and sewing-room—or, if it be summer, out in the porch, with its canopy of cherry branches—he cons the sheet, his toilsome day over, and reads every line of it, from the date to the obscurest advertisement. He delights to get you aside and hold a discussion on politics or articles of religious faith; he can hit you off the character and "record" of the candidates for President, in minutest detail; and can give you good, strong, undiluted common sense, in his nasal twang, on whatever subject you may discuss. If you be a stranger, and especially if you have travelled; his curiosity to know all about "forren parts" is insatiable. "How did you find them Polish women?" asked a farmer of us once. "Putty fine women, *I* guess: especially if you see 'em in a *mountaneous* kentry?" persuading himself that he had satisfactorily answered his own query. He is, hard worker though he be, an earnest politician in a practical way; he goes regularly to "teown meetin';" hitches his horse along the fence at the side of the town-hall, gives a rough swoop of his hand over his thick hair, goes in, and in five minutes is on his feet, making a thunderbolt speech about mending Jones's dam, or against paying the bonds in greenbacks.

Three of us, escaping from the choking dust of the city, the heat and dull stagnation of our offices, and the weary streets deserted by that life of familiar faces, which alone could make them cheerful, started off suddenly, in a kind of desperation, for Farmer Standish's. "Squire Standish's place" was situated in one of the loveliest, snuggest valley dips imaginable. Gently sloping hills, furred with mosses and soft grasses, seemed "narrowing to caress" the spot. At the back of the house you came first on an orchard, with rare wealth and variety of fruit, bounded by a helter-skelter stone wall: how often have we stretched out under its half shade, and plunged the big dirk blade of our Yankee "jack-knife" into the biggest water melon of the good farmer's patch! Behind the orchard was a cool deep wood, crossed and counter-crossed with glens, at the bottom of which were noisy streams with fat trout hiding in dark rock crevices and under thick moss bowers. In the heart of the wood was an open space, made a very grotto by the overhanging beeches and chesnuts; and here, were rude wooden tables and benches, with spots on the ground worn black and bare by great roasting fires. In front of the house, ran what would be called in England a considerable river, in America, a good sized stream; perhaps as wide as the Thames at Windsor; with a lumbering old wooden bridge just a thought aside from the good farmer's door, shaded by trees which "bent down to kiss their shadows in the stream," as far as eye could reach on either side;

with boats moored here and there, which anybody might take to go anywhere, and stay as long as they liked, and nobody care: a sort of general property, used in a primitive way.

The house was one of those square, compact, two-storey frame edifices, which, rare in England, are found at every turn in the rural districts of the older American states. It had its little plot of open lawn in front, with here and there a clump of elms, surrounded by a neat little trellis fence, and adorned by a pretty porch with shrubs about it.

This was to be our pleasant summer home. We received a hearty welcome from the farmer and his family, and were speedily settled in the airy "best bedroom," first floor front, from which a short passage, or closet, led to a smaller apartment, also designed for our party. The room had the freshest, cleanest smell in the world. How thoroughly the bare wooden floor had been scrubbed, how stiffly starched were the curtains, how perfectly pure the not too coarse cotton sheets! The good farmer's mother stared out, not uncheerfully, upon us from the wall; to be sure, she looked as if she were on the point of tumbling forth on the washingstand, but as the danger did not seem to disturb *her*, it need not disturb us. The walls were plainly white-washed, the furniture was uncertain: you ran some peril if you sat down in a chair, without testing the capabilities of its legs beforehand. A few books, a novel by James, Watts's hymns, Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, and a very, very ancient "Keepsake," were primly arranged on the table.

We were called down betimes to have a "snack o' vittles;" Farmer Standish "'sposed we must be 'tuckered out' by our journey, and hungry as a woodchuck." To the fare we did full justice, blessing the fortune which led us to so groaning a table of healthy, substantial, and really enjoyable, dishes. We adjourned to the "best sittin' room:" in truth a somewhat dreary, sombre, and musty apartment, full of strange daguerrotypes and prints, and stiff chairs, and fancy needlework framed and hung. But here was a piano; and Farmer Standish had promised that "our Nance," as he styled his eldest daughter, should regale us with some music. And she gave us a treat; for she sang a pretty ballad with a sweet voice, and real feeling.

Before we retired, we made known to our host a heroic resolution with which we had left town. In a sudden zeal of muscular Christianity, we had determined to do some amateur farming; to rise with the lark, and till the earth with our own hands. The squire laughed when we stated our resolve, and said, "All right; but you'll not stick to it, I'll be bound!" He promised, nevertheless to have us called and give us a "chore or two" in the morning.

We had hardly, as it seemed, got snugly cuddled up in bed, when "thump! thump!" came at our door, and Pat's rich Irish brogue broke rudely in upon our slumbers. In the city we were accustomed to nine o'clock ablutions and ten o'clock breakfasts; but now, as we lifted our exceedingly heavy heads, the grey dawn was but just reddening the furthest east. "Surrs, misther says ye were to be called; breakfasht is all ridy and shmokin'." There was nothing for it but to slip on our clothes, descend to the floor below, and eat what we could of the substantial fare there awaiting us. At all events, we saw the beginning of the farmer's day; the early bustle in the barnyard, where Tom was yoking the oxen, and the good dame was attending to the cows; where the cocks and hens were just scattering over the grassplot, and the farm "hands" were sharpening the scythes. As we were getting ready to follow the farmer fieldward, the sun rose; but friend Wilkins, who had never seen the sun rise before, yawningly declared that it was "a most disgusting sight."

I will not relate in detail the experiences of that toilsome day. We were set to hoeing potatoes, but threw up our hoes just as the squire had got well to work; then we had a lesson at mowing, but Wilkins ripped his fanciest summer trousers, and his rebellion thereupon infected his companions; next we went to the more humble work of gathering currants from the garden for the dame's winter jellies, but, of a sudden, found ourselves lying at full length among the bushes, converting the fruit, as lawyers say, "to our own use;" and then Wilkins pulled out his pipe, and the other two of us, ours, and that was the last of our boasted usefulness for that day. What a useless thing, to be sure, is your town hand in the country! Before we knew where we were, the farmer, his sons, and his labourers, came straggling home from all directions to dinner; and Nancy came to fetch us from our ignominious retreat to the midday meal. The New England farmers dine at high noon; and all hands came in hot and hungry excepting the "city folks" who

had just feasted liberally on the farmer's fruits. Never was a table set with lustier fare than Farmer Standish's. There was a great dish heaped up with young potatoes which seemed to reproach us for throwing up the hoe so soon; there was a lordly lump, or, as the Yankees say, "hunk," of beefsteak, describable in no other way; there were turnips and green peas, green corn—a luxury unknown to Englishmen—tomatoes, a monumental loaf of bread, and foaming pitchers of cider and home-brewed ginger beer. We sat at table with the farmer's family—or the male portion of it—and at one end of the same board were Pat and Mike, the two "hired men" from the Emerald Isle; while Nancy and Jemima, brisk, practical, useful farmer's girls, brought in the heaped-up dishes, helped this one and that one; had a word, a nod, or a giggle for each one; and "flew about," as only stout-limbed rustic Hebes can.

Dinner over, the good farmer, before returning to his work, gave us a little good-humoured lecture. "Neow you see, young men," said he, slapping his knee, "that city folks like you ain't made up fur farm work. You'll do very well to plead at nisy prius, and to write noospaper pieces, but you ain't quite up to this sort er muscle work. It ain't easy 'z rollin' off a log, I can tell ye. So you might jest as well give up, and acknowledge yourselves beat. Here's this farm, and a dozen others all around it. Jest go where you like, and doo *what* you like, all over 'em. There's fish in the river and in the brooks; fish 'em up, and we'll have 'em cooked to-morrer mornin', and you can eat 'em. There's lots of boats; and there's a place a little up the river where nobody'll see yer, and you can go swimmin' slick uz a duck's foot in the mud. Eat uz much of that fruit out in the orchard as you want—but don't eat so much uz to be laid up. Doctor fellers is scarce in these parts. Stay at home if you like, and talk to the girls, and read po'try, 'n' play cards, 'n' smoke. Do jist what you like, when you like, where you like, and heow you like. That's all. And neow, good-bye till supper time."

With which the squire tramped off, with his hoe over his shoulder, his baggy blue trousers tucked into a pair of stupendous boots, and his great straw hat jammed tight over his forehead, and serving as an umbrella to his chubby face.

We held an impromptu council, under a high cherry tree. Cigars were lighted, we flung ourselves at full length on the grass, and formed a sort of human wheel, of which our legs were the spokes, and our trio of heads the hub.

What should we do to amuse ourselves? The question was answered as soon as asked. We had got off more easily from our unfortunate project of amateur farming than we had hoped. We had all the day to ourselves, and perfect freedom of the country for miles around.

"Apropos of cigars," said Wilkins, lighting a second fragrant Havana with the stump of the first. "Let's go and see the farmer's establishment for making them. You see that field of tobacco over yonder? Old Standish raises his own weed, dries it in the big open sheds behind the barn, cures it—I don't quite know the whole process—and then has it made up into long sixes and short fives, Conchas and Cabanas, like a Cuban señor. I went over the establishment a year ago, and it's worth seeing."

We strolled, first, over to the tobacco field. The weed was just then at its full ripeness, and the long, flappy, delicately furred green leaves bent gracefully over toward the ground, growing smaller and smaller, the higher they were on the stout stalk. Few foreigners know that, even as far north as New England, in the sunny valleys of Connecticut, sheltered as they are from the bleak east winds of the Atlantic, and accustomed to a long and steady summer heat, tobacco is grown in large quantities, flourishes exuberantly, and is one of the chief sources of profit to the farmers. It needs a rich warm soil, and careful tending; but it gives, in its growth, a sentimental reward to the cultivator; for it comes up gracefully, rapidly, and beautifully, and is, with some care, one of the most satisfactory crops to "handle." Having gazed at and tasted the thick leaves, we sauntered behind the barn, and there saw the long open shed, with beams running parallel from end to end, where the gathered tobacco leaves were hung to be thoroughly dried by the sun. Then Wilkins conducted us for some distance along the river bank; we jumped into a boat, and rowed perhaps half a mile, landing by the side of a little shop-like building, where we heard the hum of voices and the commotion of many busy persons. We entered, and found ourselves in a long low room, having wide tables ranged along the walls; here, working rapidly, were rows of ruddy, chatty country girls, who, as they worked, laughed and talked, and now and then hummed a verse of some familiar ballad. Neatly packed piles of the dried

and cured leaf lay on the tables before them. Each was armed with knives and cutters, and we watched the quick transformation of the flat leaves into the smooth and compact cigars. The tobacco grown upon the farm was, we discovered, only used as wrappers for the cigars. The good farmer imported, for the interior filling, a fine tobacco from Havana. Strips and little pieces of this the girls placed in the centre of the cigar, wrapping the Connecticut tobacco in wide strips tightly about it, then pasting each of the last with some paste in a pot by their side. It seemed to be done almost in an instant; the Havana slips were laid down, cut and trimmed, and pressed into shape in a twinkling; the wrappers were cut as quickly; and more rapidly than I can describe it, the cigar was made. These girls were mostly daughters of neighbouring farmers, who received so much per hundred cigars made; intelligent, bright-eyed, and witty; many of them comely, with rosy cheeks and ruddy health: educated at the common schools, and able, their day's work over, to sit down at the piano and rattle away ad infinitum.

His stock of cigars thus made up, from the first sowing to the last finishing touch, the good squire (being, Yankee like, a sort of Jack-of-all-trades), would have them put up in gorgeously labelled boxes, carry them to town, and sell them to retail dealers: not disdaining himself, twice or thrice a year, to go through the neighbouring States with samples, and acting as his own commercial traveller.

Once resolved to relinquish all idea of amateur farming and experimental muscular Christianity, and entering on a career of pure pastime, we found plenty to do. Farmer Standish's boys and girls were fertile in expedients, and brought out all the traditional country sports and exercises they had inherited from the older generations. It was just the season—August—for picnics and long jaunts to the famous sights of the neighbourhood. Busy as the farmers were with their crops, their full-eared corn and their rich yellow wheat, many an afternoon was found when the boys and girls would be spared from the fields, and gave up their whole energy to a roystering, rollicking time. The announcement of a picnic in the woods brought plenty of recruits, who came abundantly supplied with hampers of provisions, and with spirits all alive to the keen pleasures of the occasion. The girls would rise an hour earlier than usual, so as to finish their daily routine in time to cook the fowl, and prepare the ham, and slice the sandwiches, and make the apple and pumpkin pies; while the boys, as soon as they could escape from the harvest drudgery, hastened to the wood, and cleared the picnic grove of the rubbish which the storms and winds had strewn about since the last feast there. Afternoon arrived, the waggons came rumbling up this road and that; the horses were hitched under the farmer's spacious carriage shed; and all hands, the youths gallantly carrying the baskets on one arm and the damsels on the other, hastened, with many a laugh and song and joke, to the spot of the day's merry-making. Once there, little time was lost; these sturdy souls, used so constantly to robust day-long labour, appreciated to the utmost the limited hours of a holiday when it came. You should have seen the energy which was thrown into the good old-time games: many of them inherited from the "mother isle;" others born in Yankee land itself! Now, all would huddle into a close-ranked ring, and "Copenhagen," with its chasing, slapping, screaming, kissing, and all, would be the order of the moment; then, the party would sit on the turfy ground, again in a ring, and the "slipper," concealed from view, would move mysteriously here and there, its seeker dodging to secure it, but dodging just too late; then "fortunes" would be told, and "preferences" made, and "characters" drawn, until some one, seeing the games lag a little, and observing that the more elderly damsels had not yet quite set the table, would propose a race through the woods, or a promenade by "couples" along the deep-shaded romantic paths. The rustic beaux and sweethearts would come back from their little tête-à-têtes blushing and confused somewhat, and quite fair targets for the raillery of the rest; and in the midst of it, all the party would hasten to take places on the rather ricketty benches: now well prepared to do justice to the plenteous viands.

As the season advanced, and the wild fruits ripened, parties were organised to scour the woods and roam over the pastures in search of them. All along the edges of the roads, grew luxuriantly, the large, luscious, creeping blackberry, free for all to pluck who chose; the pastures abounded with thick clumps of "huckleberry" bushes; the swamps, with the high, graceful bushes of the swamp "blueberry;"

and you could hardly go for any distance in any direction from the farmhouse without coming upon groves of chesnut trees, the prickly burrs now swelled to their largest size, and now yellowing in their full ripeness. I pity the man or woman, whether of fifteen or fifty, who could not enjoy one of these innocent, blithe, rustic parties on a berry or chesnut excursion. What opportunities did the convenient clumps of bushes present for guileless flirtation! How still would the youth or maiden be, who had discovered a spot particularly prolific of the fruit, for fear the others would find it out, and hasten to partake of its riches! How, sometimes, notwithstanding the rivalry of the day—each striving to outstrip the others in the quantity of berries picked—the girls could not refrain from screaming with delight when a thick cluster of the little black fruit met their eyes! What racing there was; what eager clutching and good-humoured scuffling! How cunningly did the damsel who had made a discovery allure her "preference" away from the rest, to help her reap the harvest! Then, in the chesnut gathering, how fond the fellows were of showing off, to the astonishment of the female portion of the party! The American chesnuts are smaller, more tender, more sweet, and far more delicate, than the European, and are delicious to the taste in their natural state, as well as roasted or boiled. So, when the lads had thrown down a large pile of the thick burrs, with many an accident (purposely brought about), of the obstinate prickles sticking in the hair of the girls, as they came down, necessitating much care and very close proximity on the part of the youths to extricate them; and when the girls had gathered them together; all hands would sit down around them under the capacious shade and proceed to enjoy a hearty feast. Sometimes a fire would be built, and the fruit roasted on the spot.

The country folk, almost everywhere in the New England States, are fond of music. There are few houses without some musical instrument or other. The girls must have their modest little piano, or harmonium, or guitar; the boys affect fiddle playing, trumpet blowing, or the violoncello or flute. One of our pleasantest summer pastimes was to organise a serenading party, and to go through the country roads on a moonlit night, in a long line of rustic vehicles. To be sure, the songs were simple ballads, or ancient negro melodies, and possibly the harmonium did not always keep time with the violoncello, or the flute with the guitar; but that only made things the more hilarious, and nobody, in those merry times, thought of criticising.

In the autumn, just before we returned to our city labours, Farmer Standish made his winter cider. His cider mill stood just beyond the barn, in a little dip of the valley; and it was interesting to witness the process of the cider-making from the heterogeneous pile of apples—good, bad, and indifferent—gathered for the purpose. The mass having been shaped in the press, and cut all around into a compact and shapely cheese, the upper wooden press was jammed down upon it; and forthwith the juice began to spurt and sputter, run down the sides of the cheese, and hasten through the little gutters to the big tub placed ready to receive it. We all had straws, and indulged ourselves without limit. "Sucking cider through a straw" is an old New England—for aught I know an old *Old* England—custom, and when the company in which you do it is of the right sort, it is pleasanter than it may seem in print.

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